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HORNE BLASTS REPORT CRITICAL OF ARIZONA'S PRE-K AVAILABILITY

PHOENIX (Wednesday, September 24, 2008) -- Arizona Schools Chief Tom Horne today blasted a report from the Washington, D.C.- based Pre-K Now that is critical of Arizona's funding of programs for pre-Kindergarten children.

"The Pre-K Now organization gets an "F" for *faulty* research, *flimsy* data, and *failure* to understand how much funding Arizonans have committed to pre-Kindergarten children," Horne stated.

"This report is so wildly off-base, that it bears no resemblance to the facts. The Pre-K Now organization claims that Arizona's pre-k funding has been "flat." Just two years ago, Arizona voters approved a multi-million dollar initiative to expand funding for pre-K services," he added.

"In FY 2007, \$300,000 was directed to Arizona pre-K programs. That figure jumped to \$8 million in FY 2008 and will increase to \$30 million in the current fiscal year. This would leave the fund with a balance of \$377 million to be distributed by regional councils, which under the voter passed initiative are to be operating by 2010. Any way you look at it, that is not 'flat funding,'" Horne noted.

Horne concluded, "I suggest the Pre-K Now researchers who believe \$300 million is a small amount of money enroll in an economics class (which we now require of our high school students) so they might learn the real value of a dollar."

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